

~~would be~~ The Decoration of Soldiers' Graves
Memorial

(1) The address of Rev. Dr. Lounsbury, at Brooklyn, on Saturday, on the occasion of decorating soldiers' graves, was as follows:

We have come together friends and fellow citizens in obedience to what I trust has already become a permanent custom. It is our annual visit to the graves of our patriotic soldiers.

The conception is a beautiful one, we owe him with whom it originated a debt of gratitude for an observance at once so simple and appropriate and expressive; it adds to the interest to think that we are uniting with millions gathered in the crowded cemeteries and in the rural grave yards of a large portion of our land.

It is a memorial hour and a memorial service. We have too few of these. Young as a nation we are rushing on, rushing forth unto that which is before - forgetting in too great a degree the things which are behind; but as with the individual so with communities and nations, there should be seasons of review as well as of anticipation. The past has its claims ~~as well as~~ no less than the future. The most sacred service of our holy religion is a memorial.

But what shall we remember? Of what shall these processions, prayers, addresses and scattered flowers remind us? Of injuries inflicted, of cruelties undergone, of terrible wrong endured? Is it to keep ever living and fresh the feelings of sectional hatred and revenge engendered by the fearful struggle through which we have passed? Do we come here to swear over these silent graves that we will avenge the sufferings and sacrifices of our patriotic soldiers? No, no, responds every Christian heart. Let these as far as may be, be forgotten. Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. It is ours the conflict over, the strife ended to breathe the spirit of forgiveness and conciliation, to repress every act and hush every word that would excite the opposite spirit. What then should we remember? The noble patriotism of our heroic soldiers. Does history on any one of its pages anywhere in any land record a patriotism more noble, unselfish, enduring than that which animated our loyal Army? True there were unworthy men in the ranks. True there were leaders who were aspiring, selfish, corrupt and soldiers who were mercenary and traitorous at heart. They were ~~not~~ all saints but taken as a whole was there even an Army so great a portion of which was animated by a purer

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and loftier patriotism? Was there ever an army numbering among its officers and men ^{more} who moved solely by love to their country offered themselves to the fatigues and perils of war?

There were fears that the spirit which we so much revered in our revolutionary fathers had become extinct; that it would never be rekindled. But the first hour of peril dissipated those fears. Men rushed at the first call to arms, with an eagerness and alacrity that astonished us. And it was no momentary impulse, it endured, suffering and peril could not extinguish it. Men returned from fields of slaughter in which their ranks had been fearfully thinned, ready to rush into the same perils and expose themselves to agony and death, and now all over our redeemed land we are gathering to strew the earliest and freshest flowers of summer on the graves of our fallen heroes, to remember their deeds of valor and enshrine their names in our affectionate remembrance.

For so they went forth, for so they endured hardships as good soldiers. For so they died. And now as a token, slight but expressive of our gratitude as a pledge that we will keep their memories green we have instituted and will perpetuate this Annual observance.

And not these alone are we called to remember. They were but the instruments. There was a controlling, guiding mind above them. We believe in God. Believing in him we believe in Providence. God's hand was in the war. Some comprehensive mind and devoted heart will yet trace this out and give the proofs of it to the world. There were great hours, sublime hours in the years of that dark conflict when men felt God, saw God, when in the streets in the marts of business, on the exchange, with uncovered heads they reverently sung "Be Thou O God exalted high", while it is fitting, that in these memorial hours we recall the Providence that guided us, that in certain moments appeared for us and that brought us safely through the fierce and terrible conflict. We will remember the most high, as we stand over these silent graves.

But not as a memorial hour alone will we keep this, but as an hour of devotion, of consecration. We come here to be reminded of what it has cost to redeem and save this Government and this Nation and to pledge ourselves anew

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to guard and protect that for which such a price has been paid.
These died for their country, they laid down their lives for its
liberties. Beneath its sacred flag they fought - even unto death
counting not their lives dear unto themselves of that might be
honored. And all these; Country, Constitution, Liberty, flag,
they in falling committed to us and from their graves to day
comes a voice saying, Be faithful to the trust committed to
you. Preserve that for which we died and shall not the
voice be heeded? will we not here plight our vows of fidelity
to our country. One of the most stirring of the Apostolic
appeals is based on the cost of human redemption. "Ye are
bought with a price therefore be faithful" Friends our country,
our liberties has been bought with a price, we are here to be
reminded of that price thousands of the noblest lives were
sacrificed for it. But this hour in its annual observance will
transmit to our children our appreciation of the event we
celebrate, and our reverence for our fallen heroes. Ten years and
centuries may this day be observed, children yet unborn will
join in it. It was thus that many of the memorial services of
the Jews were ^{appointed} divinely ~~sanctioned~~. When the Lord had —
instituted the passover and commanded its perpetuity, He
said, "And it shall come to pass when your children shall
ask what mean you by this service? that ye shall say, it is
the sacrifice of the Lord's passover who passed over the houses of
the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians
and delivered our houses". And thus shall it come to pass
when your children shall ask what mean ye by this service?
ye shall rehearse to them the noble deeds and heroic valor ~~that~~ of
the men who fought and died for their country.

Flowers have been called the smiles of God, with these
smiles to day we come to cover the graves of our honored and
departed worthies. But why this expense and pains? it will do
the dead no good. They hear not our speech, join not in our petitions,
need not our costly devotions. Why then do this? Not I answer for
them, the dead but for the living. For ourselves, our country, our
posterity we do it; it is one of those services that reacts on the
doers. If it feeds no hungry ones and cloths no naked one it feeds
our own souls, and nourishes whatever is noble and patriotic
within us. Let the observance never, never die.

